

MEDIA RELEASE

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Livestock welfare reports reinforce importance of high animal welfare standards and compliance processes

- The animal welfare incident reporting system demonstrates the Australian red meat and livestock industry's commitment to animal welfare accountability
- 70.6 million animals were sent for processing at export abattoirs between 1 Jan 2020 and 31 Dec 2021, with 631 animal welfare incidents involving 4,083 individual animals identified during this period
- Although non-compliance is extremely low (0.0058%), there is still significant room for improvement

The red meat supply chain has acknowledged the documentation tabled in the Australian Parliament yesterday relating to animal welfare incident reports held by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), which were generated by establishment management or on-plant veterinarians at export-registered abattoirs between 1 January 2020 and 31 December 2021.

"Our industry does not shy away from transparency on how we are delivering our industry-wide commitments to advancing meaningful and effective animal welfare outcomes," said Red Meat Advisory Council (RMAC) Independent Chair John McKillop.

"There are clearly examples in these reports that show animals in conditions or situations that fall far short of our high welfare standards and expectations. While the vast majority of industry participants are doing the right thing, this report highlights that there is still significant room for improvement in certain areas of the supply chain.

"There are some incident reports that appear to document mistreatment and cruelty to animals, which is completely abhorrent, unacceptable and has no place in our industry, nor do the people responsible. These isolated cases have been reported and investigated, and we will be seeking assurances that penalties have been applied and corrective action has been taken.

"We will not defend poor animal welfare practices or outcomes and Australia's strict legislation governing animal welfare are the minimum expectations of our industry and must be upheld.

"The generation of these reports is due to strengthened arrangements introduced in 2016 which required export abattoirs to have an animal welfare incident reporting system and processes to assess livestock after unloading.

"These reports demonstrate the reporting systems and compliance processes in place are working as intended, they highlight the need for improvement in certain areas of the supply chain to ensure we can continue to be recognised as world leaders in animal health, welfare and production practices.

"We are committed to work with all stakeholders so we can address shortfalls to improve practices and compliance throughout the supply chain.

"We as an industry are committed to continual improvement to ensure that our customer and consumer needs and expectations are being met. Our assurance programs must be delivered efficiently and effectively. The red meat and livestock industry remain committed to ensure the highest standards of animal welfare practices are upheld throughout the supply chain – from producers to feedlot operators, transporters and livestock processors," said Mr McKillop.

BACKGROUND

The Red Meat Advisory Council (RMAC) is Australia's only policy leadership and advisory forum made up of producers, lot feeders, processors, manufacturers, retailers and livestock exporters, representing the entire supply chain from paddock to plate. RMAC members are the following prescribed Peak Industry Councils under the *Australian Meat and Livestock Industry Act 1997*:



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